

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9119

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ROME 898

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IT

SUBJECT: TEMPTATIONS INCREASE FOR CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT-COMMUNIST
ACCORDS AT LOCAL LEVEL

REF: ROME 17846

SUMMARY. IN THE WAKE OF THE VENICE QUOTE MINI-COMPROMISE UNQUOTE (REFTEL) IN LATE DECEMBER BETWEEN THE COMMUNIST PARTY (PCI) AND THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS (DC), LOCAL DC PARTY ORGANIZATIONS IN SEVERAL AREAS HAVE SHOWN INCREASED INTEREST IN REACHING A FORMAL ACCOMMODATION WITH THE LOCAL PCI. ALREADY IN AVELLINO AND AGRIGENTO THE LOCAL DC ORGANIZATION HAS SOLICITED PCI QUOTE COLLABORATION UNQUOTE IN RESOLVING LOCAL PROBLEMS. IN COSENZE, THE LOCAL DC ORGANIZATION IS OPENLY DEBATING THE ISSUE OF SUCH AN APPROACH TO THE COMMUNISTS. EMBASSY SOURCES REPORT THAT INCREASING NUMBERS OF DC LOCAL CADRES CONSIDER AN ACCORD WITH THE COMMUNISTS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL AS INEVITABLE AND NECESSARY TO ASSURE THE CONTINUATION OF THEIR OWN POWER BASE. FOR THE MOMENT THE DC NATIONAL LEADERSHIP IS DOWNPLAYING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THESE DEVELOPMENTS, ASCRIBING THEM TO PURELY LOCAL FACTORS. HOWEVER, IN THE EVENT OF HEAVY DC LOSSES IN THE FORTHCOMING REGIONAL ELECTIONS, THERE IS LIKELY TO BE A PROLIFERATION OF DC-PCI QUOTE MINI-COMPROMISES UNQUOTE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL. END SUMMARY.

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1. OUR CONSUL GENERAL IN NAPLES CONFIRMS PRESS REPORTS THAT THE DCM PARTY IN AVELLINO PROVINCE (POP. 430,000) HAS CALLED ON THE PCI TO QUOTE COLLABORATE IN THE SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEMS UNQUOTE OF THE AREA. THE PRECISE FORM OF COLLABORATION IS NOT SPECIFIED BUT PRESUMABLY A FORMAL CONSULTATIVE LINK WITH THE PCI RATHER THAN PCI ENTRY INTO THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT IS INVOLVED. AFTER AN INITIAL DISCUSSION IN THE PROVINCIAL COUNCIL, DEBATE ON THE ISSUE HAS BEEN POSTPONED UNTIL JANUARY 23. THE DC IN AVELLINO IS CONTROLLED BY LEFT WING BASE FACTION LEADER, FOREIGN TRADE MINISTER DE MITA, WHO HAS IN THE PAST LED THE PACK IN CALLING FOR A QUOTE CONSTITUTIONAL PACT UNQUOTE INVOLVING DC-PCI COLLABORATION. IN ADDITION TO ITS IDEOLOGICAL PROPENSITY FOR CLOSER RELATIONS WITH THE COMMUNISTS, THE LOCAL DC IS APPARENTLY MOTIVATED BY IRRITATION WITH THE LOCAL PSI, WHICH HAS BEEN DEMANDING THE PRESIDENCY OF THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT--A POST HELD UNTIL THE NOVEMBER LOCAL ELECTIONS BY THE DC. TO COMPLICATE MATTERS FURTHER, DC RELATIONS WITH THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS ARE AT A NADIR FOLLOWING THE DEFECTION LAST YEAR OF EX-DC MINISTER SULLO TO PSDI RANKS. WERE IT NOT FOR THE IDEOLOGICAL FACTORS AND ELEMENTS OF DC-PSI AND DC-PSDI FRICTION INVOLVED, THE LOCAL DC'S ACTION WOULD BE HARD TO UNDERSTAND IN VIEW OF THE TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY IN THE PROVINCIAL COUNCIL HELD BY THE DC-PSDI-PSI TOGETHER.

2. IN AGRIGENTO (SICILY), THE LOCAL DC HAS AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY IN THE CITY COUNCIL, BUT IS REPORTEDLY RIVEN WITH FACTIONALISM. APPARENTLY AS A RESULT OF THESE INTERNAL DIVISIONS AND OF THE ALREADY EXISTING TENDENCY IN AGRIGENTO (AND IN SICILIAN LOCAL ADMINISTRATIONS GENERALLY) TOWARD QUOTE UNDER-THE-TABLE UNQUOTE WORKING ACCORDS BETWEEN THE DC AND PCI, THE AGRIGENTO DC HAS CALLED FOR PCI SUPPORT IN PASSING QUOTE TERRITORIAL PLANNING UNQUOTE LEGISLATION.

3. IN COSENZA, WHERE THE DC LEFT WING IS IN CONTROL AS IN AVELLINO, THE DC PROVINCIAL PARTY ORGANIZATON HAS OPENLY DEBATED THE QUESTION OF A MORE FORTHCOMING ATTITUDE TOWARD THE PCI. THE DC PROVINCIAL SECRETARY HAS CALLED FOR A QUOTE NEW RELATIONSHIP UNQUOTE WITH THE COMMUNISTS TO CONFIDENTIAL

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PERMIT THE PCI TO OFFER QUOTE CONCRETE SUGGESTIONS UNQUOTE FOR LEGISLATION AND ENCOURAGE THEM TO ABANDON THEIR INTRANSIGENT OPPOSITION. AS IN AVELLINO, THE BEGINNINGS OF A MORE OPEN DC ATTITUDE TOWARD THE PCI MUST BE SEEN AGAINST A BACKGROUND OF TURBULENT DC-PSI RELATIONS AND THE FAILURE OF THE CENTER-LEFT ALLIANCE TO RESOLVE LOCAL PROBELMS.

4. PREDICTABLY, THE COMMUNIST PARTY HAS REACTED FAVORABLY

TOWARD THE LOCAL DC INITIATIVES. ACCORDS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL
APPEAR TO BE A KEY AIM OF PCI POLICY AT PRESENT, AS THE
PARTY APPEARS TO RECOGNIZE THAT ENTRY OF THE COMMUNISTS INTO
THE GOVERNING MAJORITY AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL IS NOT NOW
FEASIBLE OR, PERHAPS, DESIRABLE.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ROME 0898

5. SOCIALIST REACTIONS ARE AMBIVALENT TO THE TENDENCY TOWARD
LOCAL DC OPENINGS TO THE PCI. THE SOCIALISTS HAVE GENERALLY
FAVORED QUOTE COOPERATION AMONG ALL ANTI-FASCIST FORCES
UNQUOTE (EXCEPT LIBERALS), BUT ALWAYS ARROGATE TO THEMSELVES
THE ROLE OF THE LEADER OF THE LEFT. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS
HAVE, HOWEVER, FORCED INTO THE OPEN THE LATENT CONCERN OF THE
MAJORITY DEMARTINO WING THAT DIRECT DC-PCI ACCORDS WILL
RELEGATE THEM TO AN APPENDAGE AND ELIMINATE THEIR AUTONOMY
AS A PARTY. IN A RECENT INTERVIEW, PARTY SECRETARY DEMARTINO
HAS FOR THE FIRST TIME TAKEN PAINS TO CRITICIZE BLUNTLY THE
PCI'S PROPOSAL OF THE QUOTE COMPROMESSO STORICO UNQUOTE. THE
PARTY'S LEFT WING, ON THE OTHER HAND, AGGRESSIVELY PROMOTES PCI ENTRY
INTO GOVERNMENT
UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCE, AND OFTEN SUCCEEDS IN IMPOSING ITS
VIEWS ON THE DEMARTINO MAJORITY WING THROUGH THREAT OF A
SPLIT.

6. EMBASSY SOURCES SEE THE TENDENCY TOWARD GREATER OPENNESS
TOWARD THE PCI AT THE LOCAL LEVEL AS STEMMING FROM A SERIES
OF NEGATIVE FACTORS CURRENTLY AFFECTING THE DC AND CENTER-LEFT.
THEY POINT OUT THAT THE DC PARTY IS UNDER CONSTANT ATTACK IN

THE PRESS FOR FAILURE TO PASS NEEDED REFORMS, INVOLVEMENT IN RECURRING FINANCIAL SCANDALS AND THE INABILITY THUS FAR TO REVITALIZE ITSELF. PUBLIC CRITICISM OF THE PARTY IS PARTICULARLY FELT AT THE LOCAL LEVEL AND SOME LOCAL DC CADRES ARE THUS TEMPTED TO MOVE WITH THE TIDE AND ACCEPT PCI ASSISTANCE
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IN PASSING LEGISLATION BLOCKED BY CENTER-LEFT INTERNAL FRIC-TIONS. IN ADDITION, AND ESPECIALLY SINCE THE MAY DIVORCE REFER-ENDUM, THE SOCIALISTS PARTY HAS BEEN PRESSING THE DC TO TURN OVER A GREATER SHARE OF THE POWER AND PATRONAGE PIE. THIS THE DC HAS FIERCELY RESISTED AND SOME DC LOCAL LEADERS MAY SEE AN ACCORD WITH THE COMMUNISTS OVER THE HEADS OF THE SOCIALISTS AS A POSSIBLE WAY TO HAND ONTO POWER IN THE SHORT TERM.

7. FOLLOWING PRESS PLAY OF DC INCLINATIONS TO OPEN TO THE COMMUNISTS IN AVELLINO, COSENZA AND AGRIGENTO, DC PARTY SECRETARY FANFANI CONVOKED THE DC PROVINCIAL SECRETARIES INVOLVED. SUBSEQUENTLY, IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS RAISED AT A MEETING JANUARY 20 OF DC REGIONAL PARTY LEADERS IN PREPARA-TION FOR THE REGIONAL ELECTIONS, FANFANI PREPOTEDLY AGAIN DOWN-PLAYED THE IMPORTANCE OF THE VENICE DC-PCI ACCORD AND STATED THAT THE DC SECRETARIES FROM AVELLINO, COSENZA AND AGRI-GENTO HAD ASSURED HIM THAAT THEY TOO OPPOSE A QUOTE HISTORIC COMPROMISE UNQUOTE WITH THE PCI AT THE LOCAL LEVEL. FANFANI REPORTEDLY EXPLAINED THE RECENTLY PUBLICIZED LOCAL DC RAPPROCHMENT WITH THE PCI AS EXPLAINABLE ENTIRELY IN TERMS OF LOCAL ISSUES AND INSISTED THAT IT DOES NOT CONSTITUTE A CHANGE OF PARTY POLICY.

8. COMMENT. THE FACT THAT FANFANI HAS DOWNPLAYED RATHER THAN CONDEMNED THESE DEVELOPMENTS PROBABLY REFLECTS MORE HIS INABILITY TO PREVENT THEM RATHER THAN WISHFUL THINKING ON HIS PART THAT THEY ARE POLITICALLY INSIGNIFICANT. ALTHOUGH IT IS UNLIKELY THAT DRAMATIC MOVES WILL BE MADE IN THE DIRECTION OF DC-PCI LOCAL ACCORDS PRIOR TO THE REGIONAL ELECTIONS, A DC DEFEAT IN THESE ELECTIONS WOULD SURELY GIVE IMPETUS TO THE PROLIFERATION OF DC-PCI MINI-COMPROMISES. VOLPE

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